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ABSTRACT

A practicum was conducted at a rural hospital-subsidized child development center to reduce the inappropriate responses of teachers in meeting the needs of children from 6 weeks to 6 years of age. Informal observations indicated that staff members of the center were not using child development knowledge in guiding and responding to children. The physical environment was not arranged to support active learning, open-ended experiences, or language development; daily experiences at the center were not structured to give children and adults the greatest potential for interaction. A series of inservice training sessions, addressing the areas of early childhood development, learning environment, learning experiences, and supportive staff responses, were conducted on-site for all 20 staff members. Staff members were divided into teams and assigned to one of two supervisors who served as consultants and facilitators. After each training session, the supervisor and staff member agreed on goals to achieve in relation to inservice knowledge and skills. Implementation was monitored, and data were collected in a portfolio. Progress was reviewed and evaluated by the staff member and supervisor. Subsequent to the training sessions, inappropriate responses declined, and appropriate techniques of supporting child development increased. (AC)

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IMPROVING GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM THROUGH INSERVICE TRAINING AND OBSERVATION

by

Cindy Gehron Treme

Cluster 41

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A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Cindy G. Treme under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

June 19, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

June S. Delano
June S. Delano, Ph.D., Advisor

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IMPROVING GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM THROUGH INSERVICE TRAINING AND OBSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

Improving Guidance Techniques for Early Childhood Program Through Inservice Training and Observation. Treme, Cindy, 1994: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Guidance Techniques/Early Childhood/Training/Inservice/Child Development/Appropriate Environments/Peer Problem-Solving/ Observation/Facilitator Supervision/Learning Environment/Learning Experiences

This practicum attempted to reduce the inappropriate responses by teachers in meeting the needs of children from six-weeks old to six-years-old. It also attempted to improve the guidance techniques by providing child development inservices and observations with evaluations for early childhood staff members to acquire appropriate expectations and to implement appropriate responses.

A series of inservice sessions, addressing the areas of early childhood development, learning environment, learning experiences and supportive responses by staff was conducted on-site for all staff members. Staff members were divided into teams and assigned to one of two supervisors who served as consultants and facilitators. After each inservice, the supervisor and staff member agreed on goals to achieve in relation to inservice knowledge and skills. Implementation was monitored and collected in a portfolio. Progress was reviewed and evaluated by the staff member and supervisor. An added component was the peer observation and peer evaluation as parts of teams formed for problem-solving. Data, based on observations, was collected before and after the duration of the project. Feedback information was also collected.

Outcomes of this practicum were very encouraging. All of the objectives were achieved satisfactorily. Inappropriate responses declined and appropriate techniques of supporting child development in appropriate environments increased. The data from this practicum strongly demonstrated the following: (a) the learning environment could be assessed and altered to provide a more supportive learning experience, (b) a strong base of child development knowledge and supervised application could be learned by early childhood staff with a diverse training background, (c) early childhood teachers can form reasonable expectations and respond supportively when supported by a facilitator/supervisor acting as a consultant.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Description of Work Setting and Community

The setting for this practicum was a hospital-subsidized child development center in a rural town with a population of 20,000. The center serves health care professionals and other businesses in the community. The majority of the children's parents create a dual-professional family structure for the children. Less than 25% of the families qualify for federal assistance or social programs. Less than 30% of the children come from single-parent families. The center is challenged to provide child care for parents who have demanding careers, work long hours and require additional training for career advancement. The parents have extremely high expectations for their children's programs, with concern for future academic success.

The center opens at 6:15 a.m. to accommodate surgical staff and commuters. A double shift of staffing accommodates employees' children for parents who work the evening shift or attend night classes.

Some children may stay 13 hours, due to the 12-hour shift schedules common to clinical care in the health care industry. The center services the young children and their families by providing meals, snacks, child-adult ratios, health standards and staff training which exceed the child care minimum standards for Class A-licensed centers in the state. Some teachers at the facility have Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, early childhood vocational training, a two-year associate degree in child development or a four-year college degree.

The teachers plan for the daily routine and learning experiences for the children, using adaptive processes which are developmentally appropriate for each age group served. The program offered to children consists of infant and toddler play groups, half-day and all-day preschool programs and school age care for before and after school and school holidays. Each group has assigned teachers and support staff.

Although considered a rural town, the community is the site of four major industries. Additionally, a major army installation and training center is located near the community. This community, and its resources, strives to meet most of the needs of these working families with young children. However, the hospital is the only company which currently addresses

and financially supports the working parents and child care needs. The child care needs of those families impact the whole community and recruitment of prospective employees. The diverse background of the professionals in this community add to the diversity of the needs in regard to serving young children and their families.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is the child care and development department director and supervisor of the early childhood staff for the hospital-sponsored program. As director, the writer oversees the department as management level staff for the hospital. The director answers directly to the hospital administrator and receives advice from the financial administrator. The assistant director is responsible for on-site training and scheduling additional training from other resources for the staff of 20 early childhood professionals. Both the director and assistant director of the child development center hold master's degrees in Early Childhood Education. Both bring over 10 years of experience in the state public school education system to the program. The director has been responsible for this program since 1989.

The center has grown from an enrollment of 25 children in 1989 to the current enrollment of 180 children, serving children from birth to school age. The daily average census is 100 children with the remainder comprising parttime children who share positions on alternating days and school-age children. The facility offers the same quality service to community parents as to hospital parents. The hospital parents are given financial assistance in the form of a 30% discount. The hospital supports the working parents through this subsidy and the availability of the on-site facility.

The population involved in this project consists of 20 staff persons. The writer, as director of the center and department head within the hospital structure, is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the center, including budget, personnel, marketing, curriculum and philosophy. Other responsibilities include service on the state level as a certified trainer for child care programs, membership on the state licensing board for child care facilities and child advocate at local and state levels.

The writer brings the perspective of child care in health care settings to this project, as well as the perspective of business serving parents who are working and caring. The writer is also a parent of a

high school graduate and two young children and is personally aware of concerns facing professionals challenged by work, family and community service.

CHAPTER II

Study of the Problem

Problem Description

The goal of the child development center is to constantly strive for the highest quality possible in providing an early childhood program. Different aspects of the curriculum, parent participation or learning environment were addressed. The writer observed the problem to be that the staff members of the child development center did not use child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences required in caring for the children served from birth to six-years-old as noted on informal observation forms. The writer recognized the importance of addressing the need for improving guidance techniques, based on child development knowledge and appropriate practices, for early childhood professionals.

The infant, toddler and preschool groups within the center were divided according to age groups. These group assignments and supervision responsibilities of the staff were involved in the proposal. The writer observed these groups for data to determine the methods of responding to children

and application of child development theory in guiding young children. In observing the interactions between the adults and children, it was important to note the use of child development theory in the physical, social and emotional aspects of the learning environment. Figure 1 shows the group assignments and staff assignments for the different ages in the center's program. The problem identified was the

Figure 1

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS AND TEACHER POSITIONS
Project Site

group	# of teachers	# of children
INFANT I	2	6
INFANT II	2	10
TODDLER I	2	12
TODDLER II	2	18
PREK IA	2	20
PREK IB	2	20
PREK IIA	2	22
PREK IIB	2	22
TODDLER ROVER	1	
PREK ROVER	1	
EVENING	2	

inappropriate guidance techniques and expectations exhibited by the staff members when responding to the children. Consequently, the staff perceived the

children. Consequently, the staff perceived the children as misbehaving, causing problems and difficult to nurture.

The staff members were not planning the environment and experiences based on early childhood development. The physical environment was not arranged to support active learning, open-ended experiences or language development in young children. The daily experiences were not structured in a manner to give children and adults the greatest potential for interaction, including interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Problem Documentation

The problem, as evidenced in data collected by the writer, showed that the staff members of the child development center did not use child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences required in caring for children from birth to six-years-old . Observation of the different age groups of children within each class setting noted that inappropriate dialogue, facial gestures and movement were used by the staff members to guide the children. Staff evaluations by supervisors noted improvement was needed in the redirection of children when inappropriate behavior occured. The assistant

director of the center recorded that 80% of the child-adult problems were linked to guidance or correction without consideration for child development and the stages of individual development for each child.

Staff members designed environments for the children which showed no regard for the developmental needs of that age group. Staff members planned and attempted to implement learning experiences which were inappropriate for the age group being served. Behavior which was normal for different age groups was documented as misbehavior by staff in preparing information for parent communications.

Causative Analysis

The literature reveals possible causes for the staff members of the early childhood program not using child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences for children from birth to six-years-old. According to the National Child Care Staffing Study, formal education and training of staff members affect their practice of sensitive and appropriate caregiving and the language and social development of children in early childhood programs (Whitebook, 1989). Without knowledge of child development, staff members deal with behavior in group settings of young children in regard to what is

happening, rather than to how the children can use an experience to learn and develop relationships with others (Katz, 1984). Specialized training may not singularly provide appropriate guidance as asserted by Clarke-Stewart and Gruber (1984) who found that certificated early childhood educators tended to stress cognitive achievement with less emphasis on other facets of child development. Early childhood staff persons who have a fixed association with school as a place for teachers talking at students, requiring rote memorization and participation in a passive manner may incorrectly apply these experiences in guiding young children (Brand, 1990).

Logue, Krause-Eheart and Miles (1986) state that degreed teachers in early childhood programs are observed directing structured activities for young children more than playing and interacting with children. Different areas that affect this issue include parent/teacher communications, staff/parent relationships, employee-sponsored child care programs, staff development, staff supervision and language acquisition in young children.

The selection of materials, planning of space and providing the correct balance of adult-directed and self-directed experiences for a group of young children requires knowledge about child development

(Curry & Johnson, 1990). The manner in which staff communicates with parents reveals staff attitudes, in regard to relationships with the children, and affects the bond between the child, parents and staff (Cherry, 1983). Parents need to be involved in the quest for child development and appropriate experiences as they work consistently with early childhood programs to prevent unnecessary stress, frustration and low self-esteem in young children (Elkind, 1987).

Evaluation of staff should be for the purpose of determining growth and development within a purposeful, appropriate plan for change that meets the needs of the staff person, the early childhood program and the children being served (Catron & Kendall, 1984). To promote the development of staff members from beginning teaching skills to effective teaching application requires skilled supervision and guidance by knowledgeable supervisors (Hegland, 1982). Impacting this solution is the high turnover rates in the early childhood field. The National Child Care Staffing Study, by the Child Care Employee Project, states that the most important determinant of turnover among early childhood programs was wages, with those between four and five dollars an hour resulting in 36% six-month staff turnover (Whitebook, 1989).

Employee-sponsored child care has increased in response to the needs of today's working families. The Bureau of Labor reports that only 2% of the families in the United States resemble the 1950's nuclear family (Brazelton, 1987). The use of early childhood programs is steadily increasing. Children are spending more hours with other adults in these settings during crucial periods of their development. Children develop language at an individual pace and on a continual basis, with emerging self-esteem dependent upon the ability to share ideas, feelings and problems. This occurs through language acquisition and interaction with significant individuals in the ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is important that early childhood programs address these needs and the role of the adults who interact with the children.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The literature reveals that many people without professional education comprise the staff of early childhood programs and use judgement based on personal knowledge and experience that can be harmful to the quality of the program (Katz, 1984). When staff members do not utilize child development in the guidance of young children, they are more likely to become more hostile and aggressive. This behavior increases if the children are subjected to harsh

discipline, which may include yelling, unreasonable expectations and nagging (Curry & Johnson, 1990). Appropriate forms of interaction would include social skills, verbal skills, social knowledge, social perspective, observation and clinical judgement, as opposed to removal, threats, bribery or other manipulative guidance techniques (Katz, 1984).

Other literature gives evidence to the problems created when staff members do not utilize child development in the guidance of young children. The use of bribes and empty threats to change children's behavior may have a short-lived effect, actually harming a child's intrinsic motivation for appropriate behavior (Curry & Johnson, 1990). Early childhood practitioners perceive themselves to be sensitive and responsive, yet observation shows actual practice to rely heavily on correcting and directing children (Curry & Johnson, 1990). Staff members use the role of teacher similar to that of referee in trying to stop or correct situations rather than providing children with methods for developing alternative approaches group relationships (Katz, 1984).

Specialized training does not always provide appropriate guidance as asserted by Clarke-Stewart and Gruber (1984) who found that certificated early

childhood educators relied on learning experiences which utilized the practice of the staff members cutting, drawing and completing projects that become more the teacher's than the child's (Curry & Johnson, 1990). The selection of materials, planning of space and providing the correct balance of adult-directed and self-directed experiences for a group of young children requires knowledge about child development (Curry & Johnson, 1990). Logue, Krause-Eheart and Miles (1986) state that teachers in early childhood programs with other educational backgrounds are uncomfortable with the amount of play needed for young children and interacting through play with children.

The relationship between the home and school impacts the child's self-esteem and language acquisition skills. Guidance of children becomes the conduit for much of the initial verbal and non-verbal messages the child receives. Inappropriate guidance, without regard to child development and changing developmental needs, sends inappropriate messages to the child. Parents need to be involved in the quest for child development and appropriate experiences as they work consistently with early childhood programs to prevent unnecessary stress, frustration and low self-esteem in young children (Elkind, 1987).

As employers and the community attempt to respond to the changing demographics of family styles in the United States, the result is early childhood programs for over 50% of the children under six-years-old and 10 hours a day as average attendance (Brazelton, 1987). The working parents of these children are concerned about the quality of the early childhood experiences. Early childhood specialists are also concerned about the adult/child interactions which are shaping learning patterns and socialization skills for later educational goals and interpersonal relationships.

If an early childhood program is to provide the best environment for learning and socialization for young children, a strong base of child development knowledge must be the theory behind the practice. The self-esteem and language acquisition skills of children are dependent upon the professional application of child development knowledge to these facets of early childhood programs. Effective inservice training in appropriate guidance techniques with supervised application; reflective and responsive interactions skills; and age appropriate environment and learning experiences are important in implementing a plan for professional growth within an early childhood program.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

Outcomes, as a result of the project, were that the staff of the child development center would use child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences required in caring for the ages of the children served from birth to six-years-old. The areas emphasized by this project included staff interactions with children, design of the physical environment and selection of age appropriate learning experiences.

This project provided individualized inservice training for designated age groups of children; individual staff development and growth; and improved staff application of child development knowledge in regard to the special language and guidance needs of young children.

Expected Outcomes

As a result of this project, the staff would use child development knowledge in interacting with children, designing the physical environment and

selecting the learning experiences for the children. The first outcome would reflect growth over the length of the project for 18 of the 20 staff members in applying appropriate methods of adult/child interaction, based on child development knowledge. Informal observation of adult/child interactions at the center would reflect the use of appropriate practices in regard to child development knowledge. This growth would be documented with informal observation of staff-child interactions at the center, based over time and recorded on the In-Depth Observation and Anecdotal Journal form (see Appendix).

The second outcome, as a result of this project, was to change the design and implementation of appropriate physical environments to meet the needs of young children, based on child development knowledge, in all classrooms, as evidenced in floorplans showing classroom arrangements and selection of materials Staff members would design and provide environments appropriate to the needs of the children, based on child development knowledge, in all classrooms as evidenced in classroom arrangements and selection of materials.

The final outcome of this project was projected to be the implementation of appropriate learning experiences, in regard to the ages served, as

evidenced by written learning experience plans and In-Depth Observations (see Appendix). Staff members would implement learning experiences which were appropriate for the ages served in all of the classrooms.

Measurement of Outcomes

To measure the use of child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences required in caring for the ages of the children served from birth to six-years-old, the following methods were applied. The outcomes addressed by this project included staff interactions with children, design of the physical environment and selection of age appropriate learning experiences.

Staff members were observed, over time, in the center setting for use of appropriate adult/child interactions with children. These observations were logged on the observation and anecdotal journal forms (see Appendix). Observation goals were evidenced during interactions during different times of the day and in different settings within the center's program. The types and numbers of appropriate interactions were tabulated and presented in chart form. Staff members completed an attitude survey (see Appendix), prior to the project, which addressed the strengths and needs

in responding and guiding children in an early childhood setting. At the completion of the project, the staff completed the survey again. The self-survey responses were compared and presented in chart form.

The second outcome, design of the physical environment for age appropriate needs, was represented with a floorplan of each room prior to the project. A subsequent floorplan was recorded after the inservice and implementation of the project. A comparison of sample floorplans is discussed in Chapter V.

The final outcome, selection of age appropriate learning experiences, was measured by analyzing learning experiences plans which were collected over time for each of the groups of children at the center. In analyzing the plans, the writer was looking for age appropriate learning experiences, based on child development knowledge, and utilization of staff members for optimal interaction with the children. Samples of the selections are discussed in Chapter V.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Teams of shared interest and assigned age groups were formed for networking, peer support and observation, planning and presenting (Hegland, 1982). Portfolio compilation and resume writing was provided to teachers as a means of documenting and evaluating

professional improvement (Logue, Krause-Eheart & Miles, 1986). The portfolios and records of networking sessions formed an evaluation for the project. Unexpected events, needs and outcomes were noted. Staff participated in planning for the inclusion of identified project components or future study based on this information and observations.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

This practicum addressed the observable problem, in some early childhood settings, of staff members in the early childhood program not using child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences required in caring for the children served from birth to six-years-old. Literature provides some insights and examples for addressing this problem. Possible solutions from the literature include training programs that are strong in application components within observable settings, individualized plans of training which involve mutual evaluation by supervisor and employee, and self-study credentialing programs which include all facets of early childhood development. Additional solutions include teamwork among early childhood professionals working with similar age groups, increased financial and benefit rewards to early childhood practitioners, consultants who serve as facilitators for individualized lesson planning and learning experience selection. Individual professional development plans,

peer observation, portfolio compilation and designing physical environments to optimize appropriate learning experiences are also suggested by the literature.

It is essential that training programs facilitate the application of all aspects of child development theory into practice, including routines, play, the environment, dialogue and guidance (Leavitt & Krause Eheart, 1985). Training programs define child development and the role of teacher as supportive and responsive to children, rather than directive and demanding. Components often include opportunities to review theory and observe children. The most critical component to increase effectiveness is to grant the practitioner ample experience and application with supervision (Logue, M.E., Krause Eheart, B. & Miles, J., 1986).

Hegland (1982) suggests an enabler model of supervision which asserts that the staff person and the supervisor should agree on a program of improvement, develop mutual trust and respect through open communication, identify strengths and goals to meet teacher-identified needs, with the supervisor acting as training resource person. This is similar to the model used by the Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialing process. The CDA program for professional development emphasizes self-assessment

and identification of strengths and goals in regard to child development competencies, with attainment reliant on observation by a skilled facilitator in an applied setting (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1992). Release time to complete Child Development Associate (CDA) portfolios, workday in-service workshops, on-site practice of developmental activities and observation of other programs affirm to staff members the commitment of the employer (Hegland, 1982).

Teamwork in the early childhood profession allows creative cooperation to produce results where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Covey (1991) asserts that teamwork, which values differences and different perspectives, can find the best possible solutions to meeting the needs of the customers, or in this case, the children. In the spirit of mutual respect, early childhood professionals can find the "third possibility," or one that is better than separate approaches to meeting similar needs of children. This theory allows for unity, rather than uniformity. It becomes the human resource of problem-solving and quality in an early childhood field (Covey, 1991).

The National Child Care Staffing Study suggests that early childhood educators' salaries should be

raised to retain qualified teachers and to increase quality of services to children (Whitebook, Howes, Phillips & Pemberton, 1989). Specialized training is identified as an index of competence in early childhood programs but requires supervised practice and consultation if participants are to successfully integrate theory and practice (Whitebook et al.,1989). Jones (1993) expressed the need for consideration of this aspect of professional development in stating:

> Where wages are inadequate, quality of relationships is insufficient compensation. There is considerable informal evidence, however, that staff turnover decreases in programs where teachers are respected as autonomous thinkers and have opportunities to make significant decisions at both classroom and program levels. (p. 143)

These practices can enhance the quality of an early childhood program, but will not replace adequate compensation for early childhood professionals.

Other ideas to be explored include the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which in some states provides funds for an approved technical assistant to be assigned to a center to assist in areas of individualized, age appropriate lesson planning and learning experience selection.

As professional development evolves into opportunities for personal input and choice, by the teacher, the early childhood professional is recognized as an autonomous learner. The learner often includes issues from outside the classroom which affect the early childhood setting. This empowers the learner to address these issues and experience respect as strengths and goals are recognized as valid. Teachers are enabled to grow within their own circle of development, likewise better understanding the importance of children's development within appropriate circles (Jones, 1993). Teachers use choice and have input in utilizing a variety of resources which best meet individual learning styles. Video training films provide opportunities for staff to observer appropriate techniques being implemented and hear child development information from a variety of resources.

Professional memberships in organizations and attendance at conferences increases opportunities for networking with other early childhood professionals and accessing appropriate techniques for application of child development knowledge in guiding young children. The CDA credentialing program and NAEYC accreditation process encourage decisions by teachers based on early childhood theories and practices.

Networks, through memberships, conferences and workshops, take advantage of opportunities to improve competence for the benefit of children and families, both on a personal and professional level (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1992).

Team discussion and peer observation provides opportunities for early childhood practitioners to network and support coworkers in the application of developmentally appropriate practices. Staff members assume a leadership role when asked to give input to decisions and staff members develop more ownership in a project when directly involved in the planning and implementation process. Involving staff members in parent training requires a higher level of understanding and confidence in application for staff to be able to share effectively with parents while ensuring consistency with home and the early childhood program. Training becomes applied and more useful as teachers wrestle with solutions to problems as a group, reteaching information and application, dialogue with each other and problem-solve together. (Greenough, 1993).

Portfolio observation of children requires training and practice in objectively observing children, basing observation on developmental knowledge of stages and reflecting on observations and

their implications in planning for young children (Jones, 1993). Similar methods of planning and tracking professional improvement are being applied to early childhood settings. Teachers use portfolios to build a bridge from the teachers' present strengths toward the skills which need developing. This practice includes identifying areas, through specific competencies, of success, partial success and need. The teacher designs a plan of improvement, or development, which continues to enhance existing skills while accessing the resources and practice for competencies which need growth and strengthening (Greenough, 1993).

The physical environment is the setting for interaction between children and adults. Factors in the design of the environment can foster or discourage appropriate adult/child interaction. As adults and children learn, work, play and grow together in this environment, it is important that its design be based on early childhood development and age appropriate needs. If the design is attractive and appealing, well planned and organized and meets the needs of the children, the teacher is more available for interactions and dialogue with the children (Trister-Dodge, 1989).

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

This project succeeded as a result of factors in the design of the program. Each group of children and staff persons were observed to assess the techniques used in guiding and responding to children's behavior during child-adult interactions (Council for Early Childhood, 1992). Staff members met with assigned supervisors to formally identify strengths and set goals for the professional growth and development of staff members (Hegland, 1982). A series of in-service training sessions were provided, implementing a variety of methods and assigning specific practices to be implemented and evaluated during follow-up observations by supervisors and peers (Katz, 1984).

A structured system of benefits and promotion was implemented to recognize formal training, experience and improvement (Whitebook, Howes, Phillips & Pemberton, 1989). Staff members were encouraged to pursue a minimum credentialing goal of the Child Development Associate or similar program in addition to inservice training. Release time for professional development was granted to participants of the program (Greenough, 1993).

During implementation of the project, the writer, and center director, served as early childhood specialist, supervisor, resource person and

consultant. The assistant director, also an early childhood specialist, contributed as supervisor, resource person and trainer (Hegland, 1982).

The staff members participated both as students and as practitioners during the review and application of child development knowledge in regard to the special language and guidance needs of young children (Greenough, 1993). The physical environment and selection of learning experiences was analyzed by individual staff members and as staff team, with guidance from facilitators, looking for age appropriateness based on child development theory (Trister-Dodge, 1989).

The staff members were involved in identifying a personal development plan, as well as in planning individual professional development and self evaluation. Attainment of goals would impact each staff member's position on the pay scale and performance evaluation records.

The assistant director and director focused on training and methods for an improved ability in supervising and guiding staff development. Staff members were given the opportunity to practice a more professional relationship with supervisors. Staff input and ideas were used to shape the project, parent education and peer participation (Hegland, 1982).

Children and parents responded to an increase in sensitive and supportive roles on the part of staff members, enhancing the work environment for staff members and the learning environment for the children.

Report of Action Taken

During the projected timeline of the project, the writer, and center director, served as early childhood specialist, supervisor and consultant; the assistant director as supervisor, resource person and trainer; and the staff members as students and practitioners during the review and application of child development knowledge in regard to the special language and guidance needs of young children.

During the initial phase of the project, staff members were observed interacting with assigned groups of children. Observation forms were used by the director or assistant director to note the number of inappropriate guidance and communication techniques used during the observation period. The writer submitted a proposed plan of professional growth and salary adjustment which recognized attainment of formal credentials by staff members.

The writer shared this information with the staff members and assisted staff members in accessing this professional growth plan by jointly preparing

portfolios showing strengths and goals in using child development knowledge for guidance and interaction with the children. Staff members completed a pre-project attitude survey regarding appropriate language and guidance techniques used when interacting with assigned groups of children (Appendix C).

All staff members attended a three hour inservice on child development, which emphasized the assigned age groups being served and culminated in applied techniques for appropriate guidance methods.

The staff inservice meetings was divided into two age groups, infant/toddlers and preschool, to individualize the training sessions. The training sessions utilized a variety of methods, including lecture, group discussion, roleplay, video training and developing materials for immediate use with the children. Staff members and assigned supervisors met to discuss the findings and identify goals for improving guidance and communication techniques based on child development knowledge.

Teams for networking were formed. Staff persons were be grouped into teams, consisting of lead teachers, parttime assistants and aides. Each team used peer support and observation to note the use of guidance techniques, further research and apply child development knowledge and jointly planned appropriate

learning experiences and environment for the assigned groups of children.

Information from peer observation and meetings was documented on informal anecdotal observation forms to use in meeting with the assigned supervisor and to record unexpected developments during the course of the project. The supervisor met twice with the staff members to encourage progress, to act as a resource person for the staff members and to informally observe staff-child interaction. Samples of the room environments and learning experiences were placed into the individual staff portfolios to document change at the completion of the project and to provide information for training needs during the project.

Resource materials were made available to staff members for planning and identifying additional appropriate methods for guiding and communicating with young children. A schedule was developed for release time for each staff person to allow team planning, peer observation and counselling with supervisor. Good Talking With You (Educational Productions, 1991) series of video training tapes was used for group viewing by the staff during project implementation.

Parent-teacher relationships were a focus during the early phase of the program, in regard to child development and guidance. The director and/or

assistant director formally observed each staff person interacting with the assigned age group and documented progress and/or needs. The director met with each staff person to review observations, resource file, portfolio and contributions to team support group.

Staff members attended second four-hour inservice on child development with specialized emphasis on appropriate experiences and environment design for the special needs of assigned age groups. Teams continued to meet to apply the principals from the inservice and to lend support through regular peer observation and planning. Staff members reviewed parent communication practices, based on child development knowledge. Staff developed and implemented appropriate practices for improved parent communication and objective observation of children's behavior.

Parent newsletters and sharing network were implemented. Staff member chose to personalize a parent newsletter project, emphasizing child development and appropriate language and guidance for each of the different ages from birth to six-years-old. Teams developed child development information and appropriate guidance and language techniques that were helpful to parents to contribute to the bi-weekly newsletter. The newsletters were printed and distributed to parents throughout the remainder of the

project. Bulletin boards illustrating applied techniques and child development information and incorporating photographs of appropriate adult-child interaction were displayed in the infant, toddler and preschool areas of the center.

Teams continued to meet to apply the principles from the inservices and to lend support through regular peer observation and planning. The supervisor met twice with the staff members to encourage progress, to act as a resource person for the staff members and to informally observe staff-child interaction.

During the midpoint of the project, intensive analysis and application of appropriate guidance techniques were pursued. The staff participated in the third three-hour inservice training on child development with special emphasis on observing and responding to different ages of children. The staff reviewed hypothetical examples of child-child and child-adult interactions for the purpose of identifying appropriate ways of responding to child behavior. The staff completed visual aides for immediate use in the classroom as alternatives and suggestions for appropriate guidance techniques when interacting with assigned age groups of children.

Staff members reviewed examples of inappropriate responses and listed appropriate responses for interacting with young children, discussing the basis for choices as related to child development knowledge. The director and/or assistant director formally observed each staff person interacting with the assigned age group and documented progress and/or needs on observation forms. Staff planned and presented a parent education meeting, based on project achievements, child development knowledge and guidance techniques which provided parents with the opportunity to learn and apply appropriate guidance techniques. Each team used peer support and observation to note the use of guidance techniques, further review and apply child development knowledge and jointly plan appropriate learning experiences and environment for the assigned groups of children.

A practicum component was to develop a presentation for sharing outcomes of the project. The staff developed a slide presentation illustrating child development knowledge used in providing for the special language and guidance needs of the children at the center. It became an important component of training for orientation of new staff members.

New staff members were assigned to teams for training and orientation to the project and

appropriate guidance techniques, based on child development knowledge. The supervisor continued to meet with the staff members to encourage progress, to act as a resource person for the staff members and to informally observe staff-child interaction. Teams continued to meet to apply the principals from the inservice and to lend support through regular peer observation and planning.

Bulletin boards illustrated applied techniques and child development information and incorporated photographs and picture of appropriate parent-child interaction. These were displayed in the infant, toddler and preschool areas of the center.

The final inservice and preparations for evaluations emphasized child development, in regard to parent conferences and forming relationships which ensure consistent practices and support between the child and the parent and the center. Staff members scheduled parent conferences with parents of children.

The director and/or assistant director formally observe each staff person interacting with the assigned age group and documented progress and needs on observation form. The newsletters were printed and distributed to parents. Slide presentations of project were presented to parents and hospital administration during a parent participation experience. Staff

members planned and conducted the parent event, incorporating active participation and shared information regarding the project. The staff participated in the final collection of information and evaluation of project. Staff was formally observed in regard to application of child development knowledge and guidance techniques while interacting with assigned age groups. Staff completed a post-project survey regarding use of child development knowledge in meeting the language and guidance needs of the assigned age groups. Staff members were evaluated, based on portfolios, observations and supervisor conferences.

Staff members achieving goals, consistent use of appropriate guidance techniques and application of child development knowledge with assigned age groups were recommended for recognition and promotion within the company guidelines.

CHAPTER V

Results, Discussions and Recommendations

In the early childhood program chosen for the site of this project, staff members did not rely on child development knowledge in providing for the diverse language and guidance needs required in caring for children from birth to six-years-old. As a factor in the problem, the environment and learning experiences for the different age groups of children were inappropriate in regard to the different developmental needs of the children being served in this program. To address this problem, the project implemented a series of child development inservices for the staff members on-site, staff mentoring teams, professional development plans based on staff and supervisor partnership, and supervised application of inservice knowledge and appropriate practices based on early childhood development.

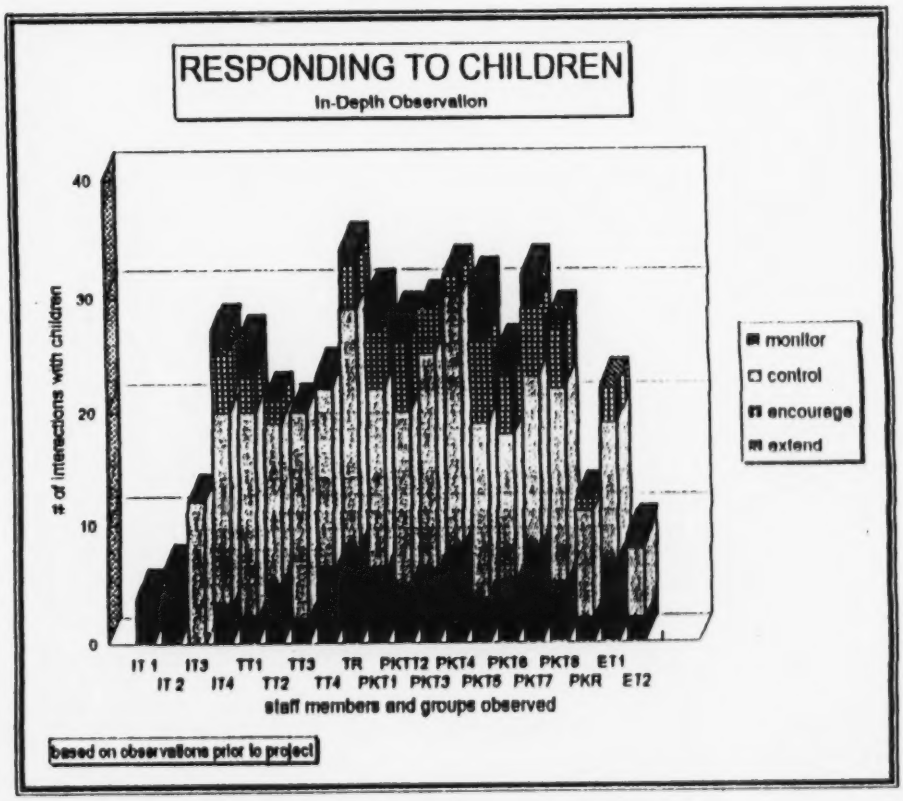
Results

Outcome 1 was to reflect growth over the length of the project for 18 of the 20 staff members in applying appropriate methods of adult/child interaction, based on child development knowledge. As a result of the project, growth was reflected over the length of the project for 19 of the 20 staff members in applying appropriate methods of adult/child interaction, based on child development knowledge. Staff members were observed, over time, in the center setting for use of appropriate adult/child interactions with children. Observation notes were evidenced during interactions at different times of the day and in different settings within the center's program. The writer observed the infant, toddler and preschool groups at the center to determine methods of responding to children's needs. The types and numbers of interactions were tabulated and are presented in chart form. These responses were noted on in-depth observation forms (see Appendix) and tabulated for each teacher,

responding to children's needs. The types and numbers of interactions were tabulated and are presented in chart form. These responses were noted on in-depth observation forms (see Appendix) and tabulated for each teacher, then again for each group of children and finally centerwide.

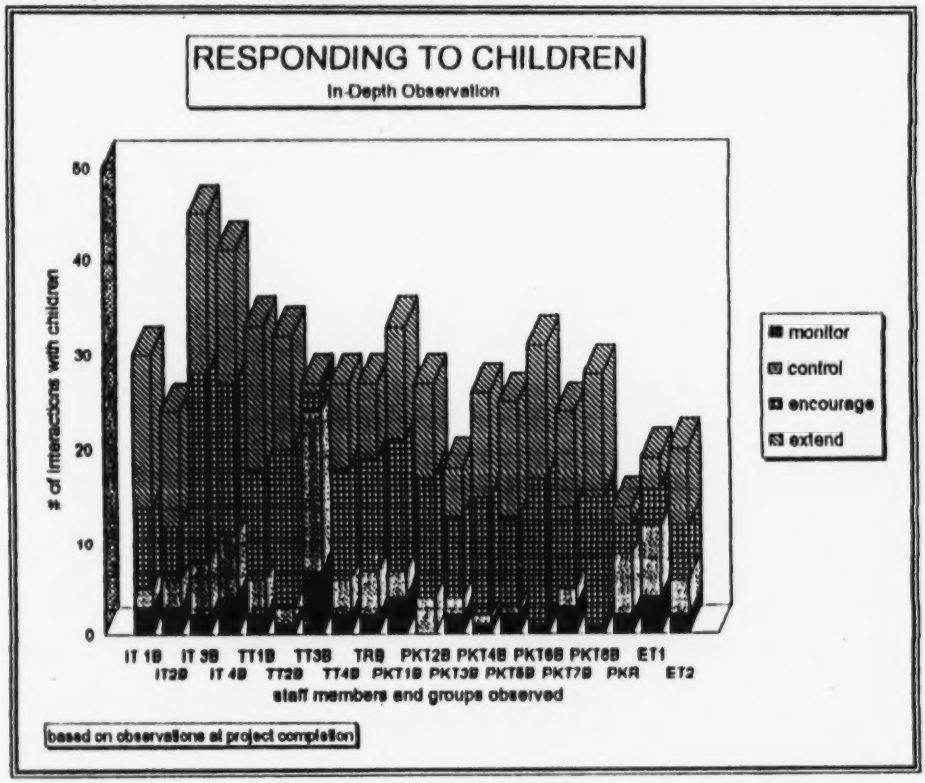
Prior to this project, the majority of the practices involved efforts of monitoring and controlling the children. Table 1 illustrates the types and number of responses to children's needs, by

Table 1



each individual staff member, as observed by the writer during a two-hour period prior to the project. As a result of the project, the types and number of responses reflected a shift from monitoring and controlling to encouraging and extending as shown in Table 2. Table 2 represents those responses, by individual staff members, during a two-hour period at the completion of the project.

Table 2



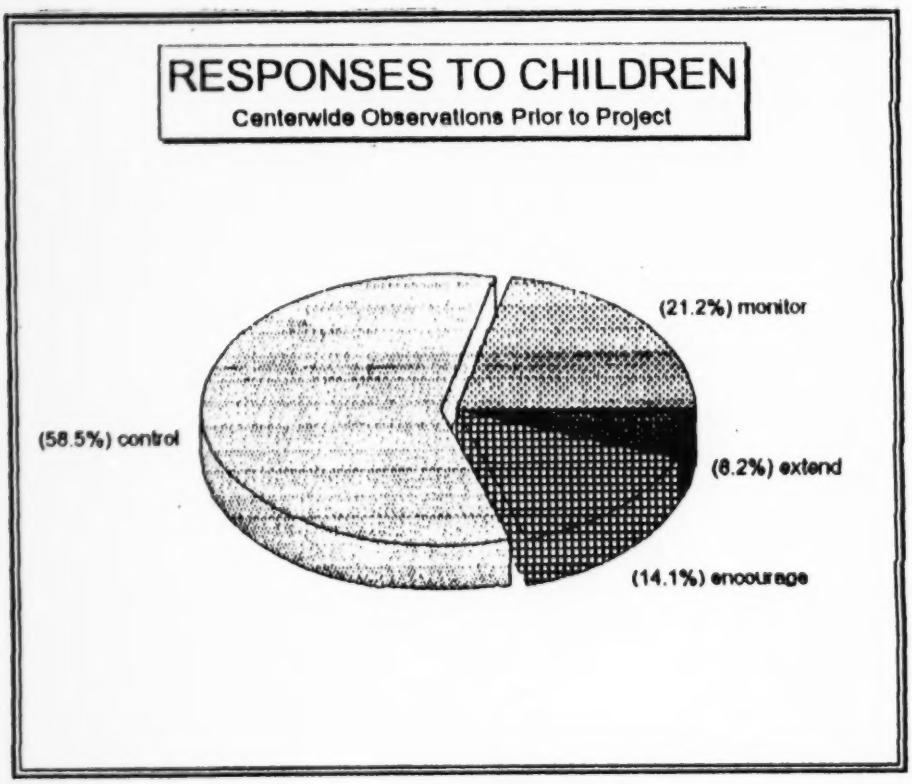
For the purpose of the observations, those responses that consisted of watching from a distance without interaction, ignoring, listening without

responding, acknowledging or eye-contact, visiting with other adults in the room and verbal corrections without involved or following through with children were clustered as **monitoring** responses. Those teacher responses which consisted of imposing choices, threats of punitive action, time-out, ridicule, lecturing, manipulating, nagging and physical removal from area were identified as **controlling** responses. The observations showed limited usage of **encouraging** responses, including supporting and participating in children's play, respect and follow children's interests, offering meaningful choices, reciprocal exchanging of both verbal and non-verbal communication, valuing all aspects of child development, approaching children at their unique level of understanding, using language to identify children's feelings and concerns. The last cluster of responses were identified as **extending** the children's concepts and development by enlisting the following practices: verbalizing daily events and routines, injecting humor without ridicule, explain the reasons when stopping behavior and redirect actions, asking children to think of possible solutions to problems, extending play to build on children's ideas and interests, model ways of interacting with people and things in the environment, inclusion of families into

the children's program and development and asking genuine questions of children.

Table 3 illustrates the types of responses observed centerwide prior to this project. Although there were never observations of physical punishment of any kind, there were threats of time-out, calling parents and denial of privileges. At the completion

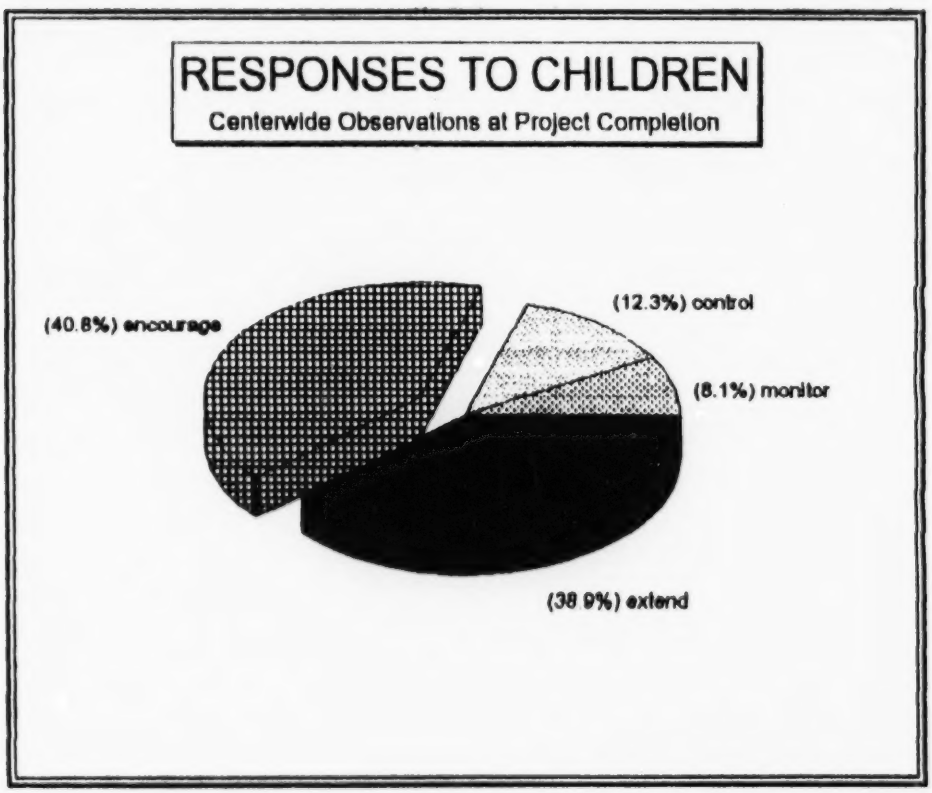
Table 3



of the project, the number and types of responses were again tabulated to compare to the initial observation. Centerwide, the focus on encouraging and extending

children's learning, based on child development knowledge, shifted from the initial dominance of monitoring and controlling, illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

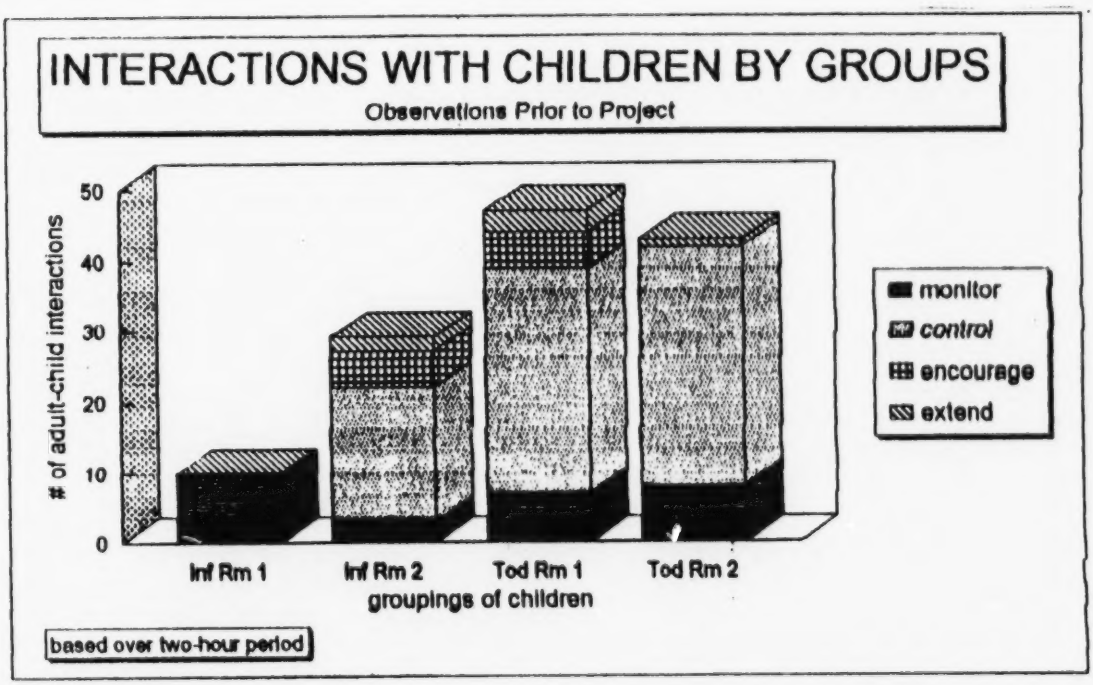


The writer's concern stemmed not only from the dominance of these types of measures without the use of more appropriate guidance practices but also from the inappropriate expectations of the teachers in regard to the children's actions, behaviors and needs. As a result of the project, teachers addressed

children's needs in regard to the diverse age groups being served at the center and a base of knowledge about child development.

To use the data for inservice input, the responses were also clustered by groups of children and teachers. Table 5 shows the practices used by the teachers within the infant and toddler age groups and represents the total responses observed or heard by

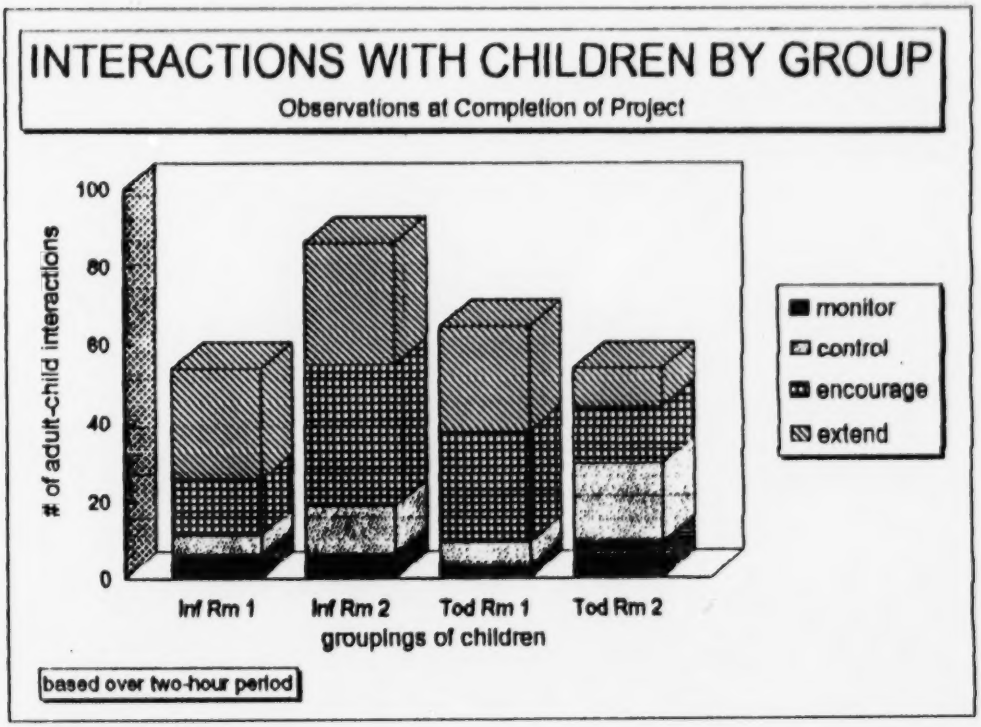
Table 5



the children in that group during a two-hour period prior to the project. Table 6 reflects the changes in types of responses at the completion of the project during a two-hour observation period. The increase in

controlling is noted for the Infant I group. The children in this group were newborns to age three months at the beginning of the project and almost one-year-old at the completion of the project. At the

Table 6

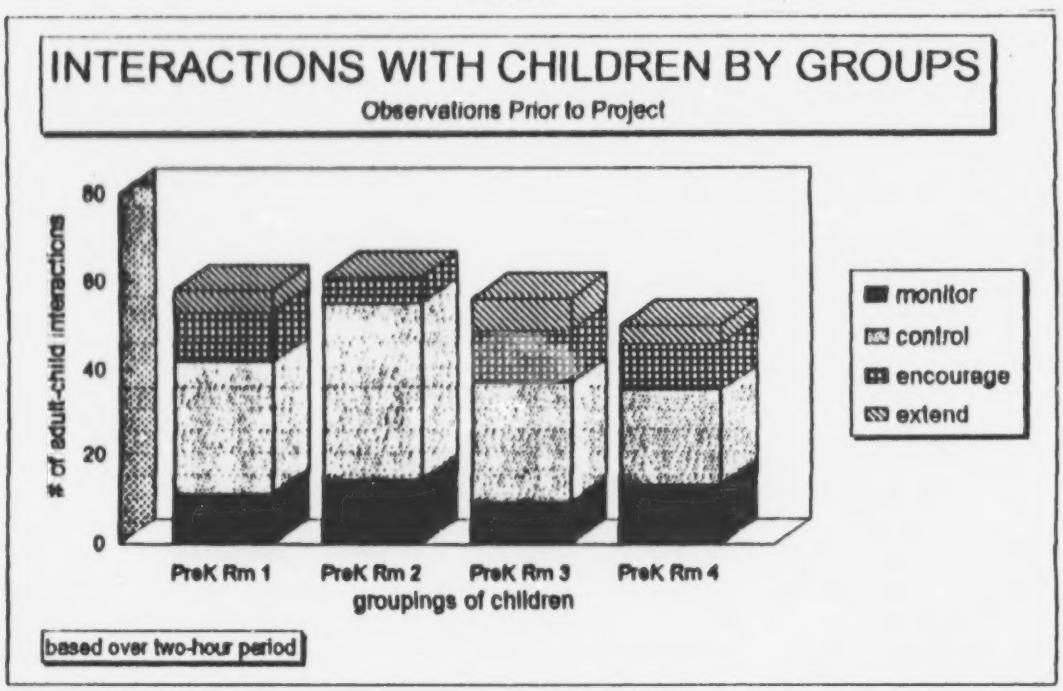


completion of the project, however, the level of control was less for Infant Room I than the level of control for the children in Infant Room II who were at that developmental stage at the beginning of the project. The table also shows the level of controlling responses in the toddler groups.

Toddler Teacher 3 was able to increase the practices of extending and encouraging, but continued to rely heavily on controlling in responding to children. Additionally, Toddler Teacher 3 also increased the level of uninvolved monitoring, or watching the children without responding. The Toddler Rover relied heavily on controlling at the beginning of the project. At the completion of the project, was able to demonstrate the practices of encouraging and extending the toddlers' play with less use on monitoring and controlling.

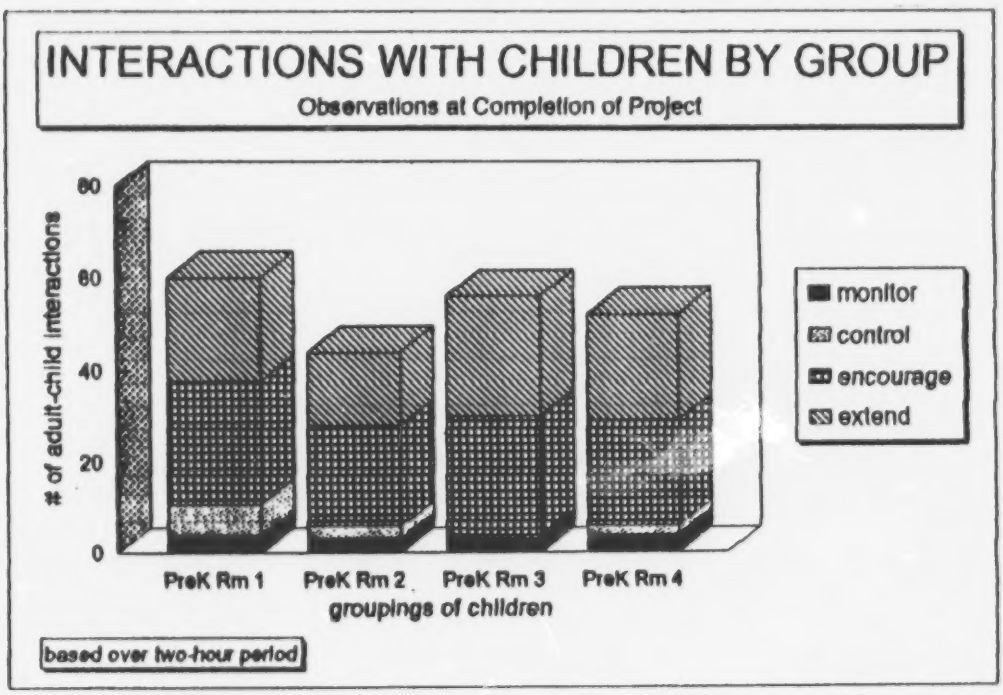
Table 7 shows the practices used by the teachers within the preschool age groups and represents the

Table 7



total responses observed or heard by the children in each group during a two-hour period prior to the project. Table 8 reflects the changes in types of responses at the completion of the project during a two-hour observation period. Preschool teachers were able to apply the practices of encouraging and extending the children's development over time.

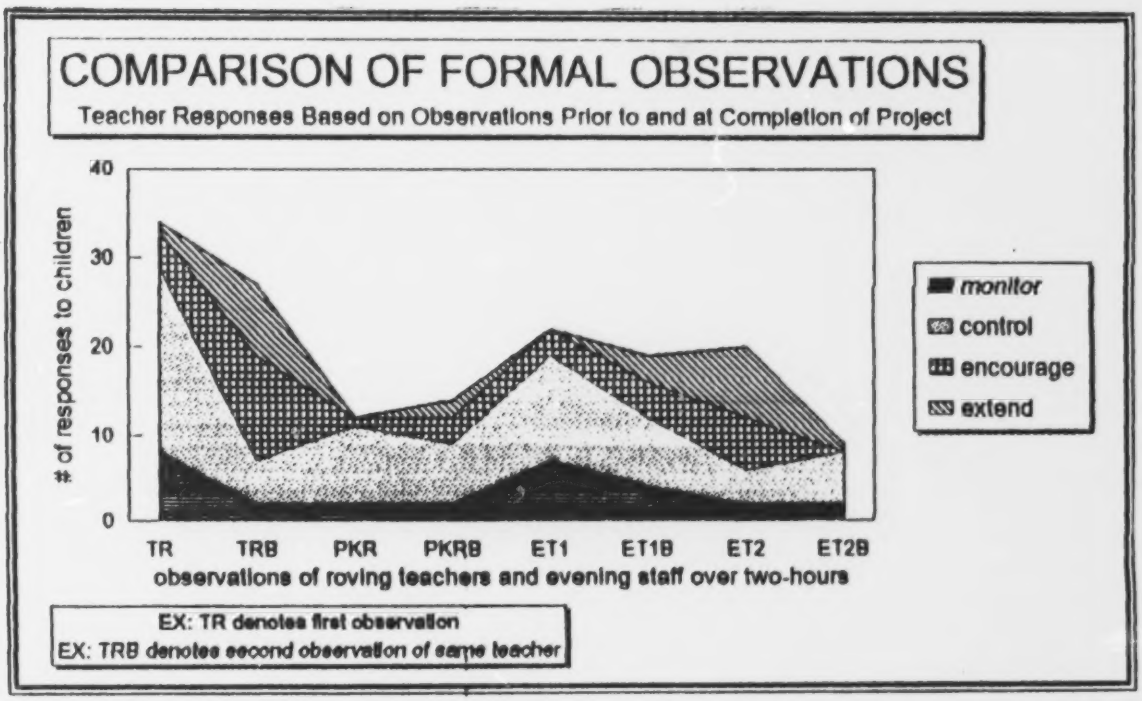
Table 8



Auxiliary staff members, roving and assistant teachers, are represented in Table 9 which shows the types of responses to children prior to the project compared to the responses at the completion of the project. The teachers in the preceding graphs

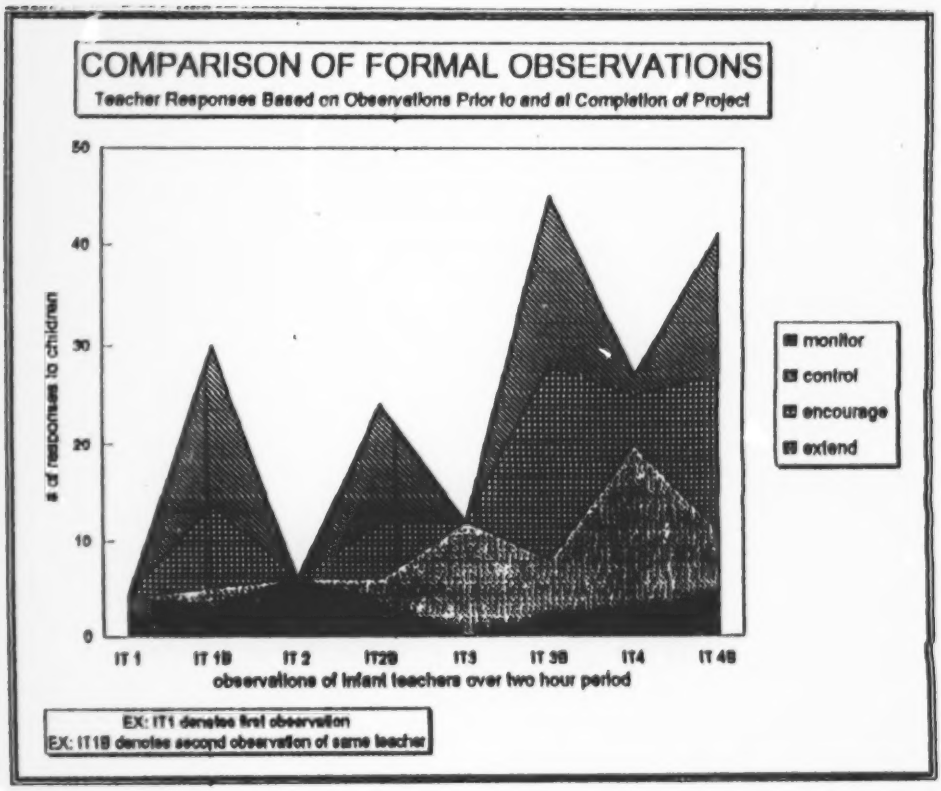
reflected more change, even though the auxiliary staff members participated in the same inservices. The

Table 9



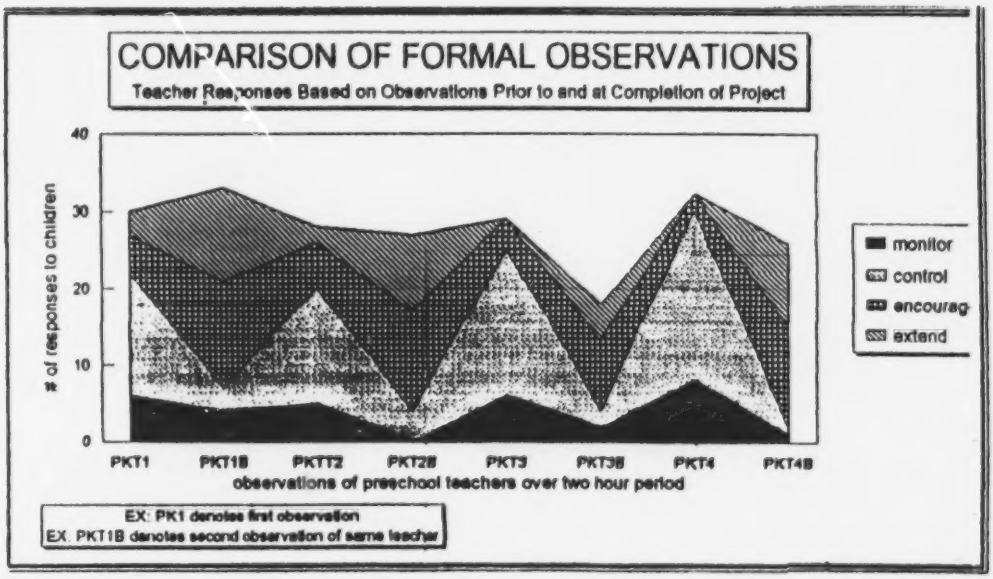
auxiliary staff members were observed in the applied setting in the same manner, but did not have the actual responsibility for a group of children as did the fulltime teachers. They also participated on teams, but did not jointly share a partnership for an assigned group of children. Table 10 illustrates the changes in the responses in regard to type for the infant and toddler teachers. This table compares the

Table 10



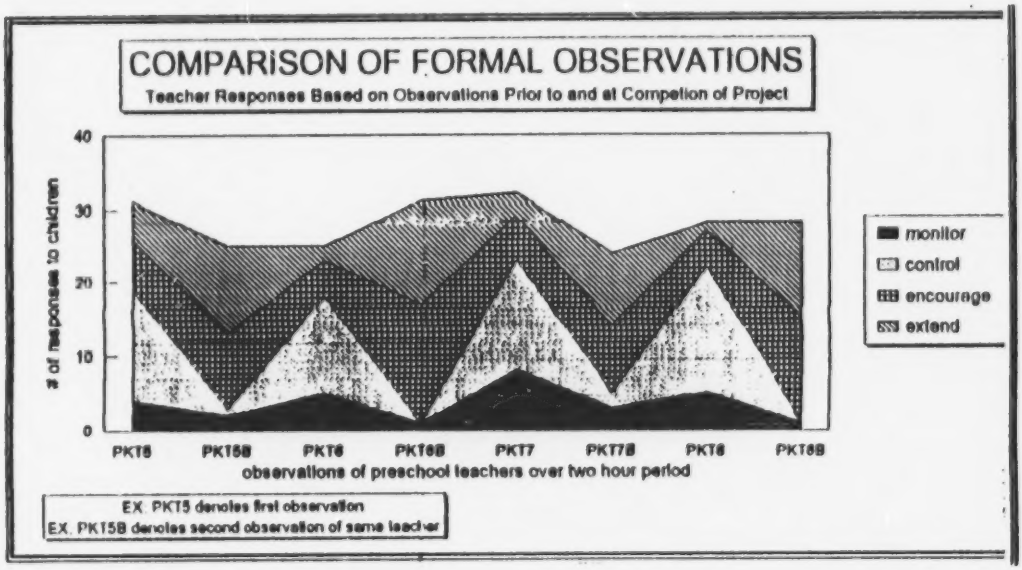
initial observation to the formal observation at the completion of the project. The area chart highlights the shift in application for each teacher over the length of the project. Table 11 and Table 12 illustrate the same comparisons of observations for the preschool teachers. The area chart compares the initial observation to the formal observation at the completion of the project. The shift in application for each teacher over the length of the project is noted. It appeared that as the support for the

Table 11



children through encouraging and extending interactions, the changed physical environment and learning experiences, there was less practice of

Table 12



controlling and uninvolved monitoring on the part of the teachers. The number of encouraging responses to the children's needs, as well as the practice of extending children's actions and language, appeared to be greatest when the level of controlling measures and passive involvement were less dominant.

Staff members completed an attitude survey prior to the project, which addressed the strengths and needs in responding and guiding children in an early childhood setting. At the completion of the project, the staff completed the survey again. The self-survey responses are compared and presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

RESPONDING TO CHILDREN
SKILL SURVEY

Average Scores by Teaching Teams

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Infant Teachers	Toddler Teachers	Preschool Teachers
DIRECT INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN			
survey prior to project	16	27	30
survey at project completion	36	44	47
SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES			
survey prior to project	15	20	21
survey at project completion	28	32	36
PROVIDE APPROPRIATE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT			
survey prior to project	10	17	19
survey at project completion	27	34	34

Outcome 2 was to change the design and implementation of appropriate physical environments and selection of materials to meet the needs of young children, based on child development knowledge, in all classrooms. Staff members were to implement the plans of action, as evidenced in floorplans showing classroom arrangements and selection of materials Staff members designed and provided environments appropriate to the needs of the children, based on child development knowledge, in all classrooms, as a focus of an inservice session. Classroom arrangements and selection of materials were addressed by each staff member and as a goal for each team.

The floor plans reflect the arrangement of space to allow for several distinct areas with well-defined boundaries, to consider other compatible uses for spaces, to ensure traffic flow around defined areas, to provide for both active and quiet play, and to provide space for child-directed and open-ended exploration. The physical environment was arranged to support active learning, open-ended experiences and language development in young children.

The selection of materials were adapted to include items for gross motor discovery and exploration, items from real-world and natural experiences of children, real and full-sized

materials, materials which can be manipulated and used in many different ways, materials which reflect diverse backgrounds of the children and materials which can be used for a variety of ages and interests.

Outcome 3 was to be the implementation of appropriate learning experiences, in regard to the ages of the children served in this program, as evidenced by written learning experience plans and in-depth observations (see Appendix). In reviewing the plans, the writer was looking for age appropriate learning experiences, based on child development knowledge, and utilization of staff members for optimal interaction with the children. Staff members implemented learning experiences which were appropriate for the ages served in all of the groups. These learning experiences valued children's development in areas of socialization, language understanding and acquisition, physical growth and movement, and hands-on opportunities to experience relationships about things in their world: how they work, how things happen, how things are the same or different, how the children can control themselves and their environment. The observations of groups and lesson plans reflected a shift in the focus from finished products which were teacher-directed to processes through which children experienced and

explored ideas and materials. The daily experiences were structured in a manner to give children and adults the greatest potential for interaction, including interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Discussion

The staff of child development centers may not always use child development knowledge in providing for the language and guidance differences required in caring for young children. Without child development knowledge as the basis for interacting with the children, an optimal environment for the children is not provided. As a result, early childhood practitioners experience frustration, less job satisfaction and a lowered self-esteem.

In the site chosen for this practicum, staff members relied more on personal experience than on child development knowledge in responding to the needs of the children. Prior to the project, observations suggested to the writer that staff members viewed their role as one of monitoring the children and intervening only when serious conflict arose. Table 1 noted that these methods of responding to children were dominant among all staff members, with the exception of the infant staff. It should be noted

that at the onset of the project, most infants were six to ten weeks old. These infants weren't mobile. Their needs were for bonding, consistency and reassurance as they gradually encountered their world. As they began to crawl and pull up on objects, sometimes including each other, teachers felt the need for controlling the movement. For example, one infant staff member felt some sort of barricade would be needed to prevent an infant from climbing. As a result of the inservices, the staff member gained a better understanding of the need for the child to safely climb appropriate objects. Bolsters, mats and carpet-covered wooden inclines, made by parents at teachers suggestions, were brought into the room. The teachers validated and encourages the children's exploring and movement. This accounts for the increase in controlling measures for this age group as the age increased to the developmental level of walking and crawling. The table also shows the reliance on controlling for the toddler age groups. As a result of inservices, toddler staff members learned to structure the environment, routine and learning opportunities to eliminate waiting and sharing, which developmentally is difficult for these children. It was a major hurdle to overcome the tendency to address the needs of all the children at

one time, such as manipulating materials, reading to them, playing with play-doh and other experiences. The toddler teachers found that the children needs were better met in small groups, attending to children by understanding and noting their interests and abilities. One toddler teacher was unable to accept that the main goal was not to teach respect for authority for this age group. This teacher resigned from the program, after the final evaluation, which reflected little growth in other methods of responding. In fact, this staff member increased the passive monitoring. The toddler rover teacher, who had relied most heavily on controlling methods, grew from the inservices and was successful at encouraging and extending children's growth by participating and play. This is shown in Table 2. This staff person's ability to interact with the children and gain an understanding of their developmental needs led to the permanent position, vacated by the resigning teacher, being offered.

The practicum addressed a controlling approach, coupled with physical environments which did not provide optimal learning experience opportunities for the age groups of children and learning experiences which did not give consideration to the developmental needs of the children. Literature reveals that many

people without professional education comprise the staff of early childhood programs, using judgement, based on personal knowledge and experience, that can be harmful to the quality of the program (Katz, 1984). This was also the case in the site chosen for the practicum. The backgrounds of staff members in this program were diverse, ranging from a high school diploma to graduate level work. Even though several members of the staff had degrees, most were from the education field with emphasis on cognitive learning. Other staff members viewed their responsibility to the children as recreating experiences, schedules and routines similar to grade school practices.

Specialized training is identified as an index of competence in early childhood programs but requires supervised practice, consultation and networking if participants are to successfully integrate theory and practice (Whitebook et al., 1989). This was the model chosen for this practicum and the solution to the identified problem. Whitebook (1989) also asserts that training and formal education directly impact a teacher's practice of sensitive and appropriate response to developmental needs of young children in early childhood programs. Katz (1984) further emphasizes the need for staff members in early childhood programs to support children in using

experiences to learn and develop concepts, rather than for staff members to only monitor and control behavior. The solution to the problem was addressed, therefore, from the dual perspective of the children's needs for optimal developmental opportunities and the staff's need to evaluate and implement personal and professional development.

Monitoring of children's behavior and activities, prior to the project, involved no participation on the part of the staff member. The posture assumed by the staff member was often uninvolved with children's play and distanced from the activities until a child-child interaction reached physical conflict proportions. In some instances, the staff member continued to ignore the situation until conflict reached severe levels. At this point, a practice of controlling out-of-bounds behavior was most often chosen as the response to children's behavior, consisting of warnings, reprimands, time-outs and imposed choices. Rather than involving children in the problem-solving, punishment was assigned based on the teacher's impression of the situation. Table 3 illustrates the dominance of controlling, followed by passive monitoring in the responses to children centerwide. Because of the monitoring without involvement, the teacher's attention was often not captured until one

child was crying, shouting or reacting in a forceful manner. Observation showed that the punishment often addressed the most recent behavior, often ignoring the precipitating actions and behavior which began the conflict. As a result, when the punishment ended, the original conflict would often ensue since the conflict had neither been resolved or addressed.

As a result, for the purpose of this project, a series of in-depth inservices in early childhood development, were implemented on-site for staff members in this program. Emphasis was placed on the developmental needs of children in the different age groups, including infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Table 4 shows that there were times that controlling was still implemented as a method of responding, but as the emphasis on supporting the children increased, the responses of encouraging and extending children's development increased. Centerwide, the learning opportunities were enhanced by a more responsive and supportive staff.

Prior to the project, the center practiced the approach to group assignment much like public school systems in the area. Children were promoted every nine to twelve months. Often early promotion was practiced as a result of behavior seen as disruptive on the part of a child. An example is the issue of

biting. Infants in the teething stage will sometimes choose a living person as the object of exploration. These children were traditionally viewed in this program as ready to move on to an older group. The teachers with the older group viewed the child's inclusion more as an intrusion and an added problem. Some of the staff members attended a conference and heard Dr. Stanley Greenspan advocate that young children needed the same caregiver for the first three years to increase the consistency and bonding. In considering the level of control in the toddler age groups, the staff members recognized the need for a new approach. It was proposed and accepted by the staff members to adopt the new practice of moving with the children. Basically, the newborn staff accepted the new assignment of moving with their children to new classrooms as the developmental needs of the children merited it. Parents were reassured and positive about the new policy. This practice, combined with the intensive inservices on child development and the peer-problem-solving groups resulting in viewing the children from a different perspective. At the conclusion of the project, the toddler teachers had been with their children for over a year. They had bonded with the children prior to most active toddler years and respected each child as

an individual. Problems the children encountered were accepted with more patience and understanding. The teachers had also bonded with the parents who worked through situations together with the staff members. As a result, the toddler teachers began to view their roles as supportive and encouraging. The center has now adopted the practice of newborn teachers remaining with the same group of children until those children reach preschool age.

Curry and Johnson (1990) suggest using childhood development knowledge to plan space, selection of materials and learning opportunities to create an appropriate balance of adult directed and child directed experiences in the early childhood environment. To achieve this goal, the series of inservices further addressed the application of childhood development knowledge in designing the environment and selecting learning experiences and opportunities for this early childhood program. Floorplans were sketchy and without consideration to the changing needs of the children. In the infant rooms, beds remained the focus of the room even after the children needed access to simple interest center and materials that changed, suitable items for exploration and discovery and gross motor opportunities. The restructured plan shows change and

illustrates the removal of beds and the addition of areas for play and exploration and small groups. Some children needed morning naps and were accommodated in one area on cots while other children were able to continue to play.

Clark-Stewart and Gruber (1984) found that early childhood teachers placed greater emphasis on cognitive achievement over other facets of childhood development. This program reflected this in the nature of the learning experiences and opportunities provided for the children. The experiences reflected concern with the finished product rather than the process experienced by the young children. As staff members relied primarily on teacher-directed activities as the main focus of the child's participation, there was less time for play and interaction. Logue, Krause-Eheart and Miles (1986) found that this approach affects several areas of the early childhood program, including both adult-child interaction and child-child interaction. Appropriate learning experiences do not utilize the practice of the staff members cutting, drawing and completing projects that become more the teacher's than the child's (Curry & Johnson, 1990). As a result of the project, teachers approached planning from the perspective of encouraging and extending the

experiences of the children. Teachers became more involved in children's genuine interests, adopted a commitment to play and the reciprocal dialogue between the adults and children in the room. As the teachers considered ways to encourage and extend the play, the need for control lessened and the children became more self-controlled as shown in Tables 5-8.

As suggested by Catron and Kendall (1984), the evaluation of the staff was for the purpose of assessing individual strengths and needs in regard to the early childhood program and the growth and development of the early childhood practitioner. Supervisors were trained to assist as consultants and resource persons. Staff members were grouped as teams and practiced mentoring, peer-observation and peer-tutoring in problem-solving and program development. For this project, each staff member and supervisor used an enabler model of development, agreeing on a program of improvement, with the staff member assuming a partnership role in the process (Hegland, 1982). The staff member maintained a portfolio with self-assessment, learning experiences, inservice assignments, learning environment plans and anecdotal information. The staff members worked together, incorporating a sharing and problem-solving informal

dialogue into each inservice session. As the project progressed, often teachers began answering each other's concerns--from the perspective of someone who had or was dealing with the same issue. This was a shift from the traditional supervisor's role of mandating change or adoption of practices. The supervisor acted as a conduit of finding resources and information, while the staff members filtered it, applied in the setting and then evaluated the outcomes. The area illustrations in Tables 9-12 show the shift in ability to respond to the children in a variety of methods, more which depended on supportive and encouraging responses. The attitude survey in Table 13 illustrates a growing confidence on the part of the staff in finding ways to support children's learning, rather than directing it.

The writer of this project proposed and advocated for a wage and benefit plan to be adopted which recognized professional growth and development in this early childhood program. The administration adopted the plan. At the conclusion of the project, two teachers are involved in training sessions to receive national certification in an early childhood approach, two teachers became Child Development Associates through the national credentialing program, an

additional six are in the process of completing their portfolios to also become certified. Three other staff members are now attending nearby universities in the early childhood or related fields.

Greenough (1993) supports professional growth and development models in which the early childhood teacher assumes both the role of student and practitioner. In this project, the concepts studied and researched as a part of the inservices were applied and evaluated in the early childhood setting by both the supervisor and the practitioner. The practitioner monitored progress, as well as peers and supervisors. The professional relationship was extended and strengthened as the supervisor valued the problems, concerns and accomplishments of the practitioner (Hegland, 1982). The practitioner's input was an integral part of the evaluation and planning process, with the supervisor clarified goals and strengths.

Recommendations

In replicating this project, the writer would recommend the use of a rating form, citing standards or criterion in each of the outcome areas. This form would include a descriptive continuum of each standard from least to most appropriate. This standard form would be helpful in assessing the level of application

and implementation of the child development knowledge by teachers early in the project. It would also be useful for each staff member to use the form in focusing a plan of action as well as to assess progress.

Technology, in the form of videos, gives the staff member a chance to see and hear all of the action in a group, including subtle interactions, from a more objective perspective. Staff members were able to evaluate responses to children and consider factors not evident at the time of filming. If handled with respect for the children and the teachers, this could be a helpful technique in adding to the realm of observation and input.

For this project, slides and photographs were used near mid-point to assess progress with the physical environment and selection of materials. As staff members used the frozen fraqme for an objective perspective, the ownership for the room envirionment was more readily accepted. This technique also provided concrete evidence of improvement and contributed to a sense of achievement for staff members.

Finally, if implementing this project again, a stronger parent information and education component would be added, with early introduction into the

process. Parent requests for more information in regard to child development and responding to children increased over the length of the program. Some parents tend to view discipline as punitive, with less regard to appropriate expectations and more emphasis on control or little involvement. Just as the expectations and environment of young children is critical to early childhood programs, consistency and knowledge of child development is needed in family interactions--an expecially precious resource in families of young children with working parents. Consideration of this change would strengthen the project and increase the circle of positive impact.

Dissemination

This project has been proposed to the state to implement in the surrounding region of the state. The proposal was accepted and funded with a $74,000 grant and the request to consider an additional grant for the purpose of further training other centers in the birth to three year continuity care approach. The project has been shared with parents and the community through seminars and presentations. Several staff members have submitted proposals to present the project slide presentation and results at several conferences in the upcoming year.

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Appendix

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION OBSERVATION AND ANECDOTAL JOURNAL FORM

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION
OBSERVATION AND ANECDOTAL JOURNAL

STAFF PERSON_____

DATE_____

CHILDREN_____

_____

_____

CONVERSATION SETTING_____

__ informal __ snack/meal time

__ centers __ outdoor

__ grouptime __ transition

Observed

___supports and participates in play
___respects and follow's child's interest
___offers meaningful choices
___exchanges verbal communication
___exchanges non-verbal communication
___values all areas of child's needs
___approaches children at their level
physically understanding
___gives words to child's feelings or concerns

___verbalizes daily events/routines
___injects humor without ridicule
___explains reasons for addressing behavior
___discusses natural consequences
___redirects actions meaningfully
___asks for possible solutions
___extends play to build on child's ideas
___models ways of interacting with people
___models ways of interacting with things
___includes diverse types of families
___asks genuine questions

Inferences/Interpretations

___remains distanced from child
___ignores child
___listens without responding
___no acknowledgement
___no eye contact
___visits with other adults
___directs comments across room

___imposes choices
___threatens punishment
___time-out
___ridicules
___lectures
___nags
___bribes
___false praise, manipulates
___physically moves

Program Implications:

Recording:

A - Adult

ch - child

R - responsive language

E - expressive language

Sample:

A ch R --

adult and child

responsive language

BEST COPY AVAILABLE